FISH & WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

Meeting Date: October 10, 2013

Agenda Item: Addition to Mount Haggin WMA, Silva Property

Division: Wildlife   **Action Needed:** Preliminary Approval

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 10 minutes

Background
Mount Haggin Wildlife Management Area is a 58,000-acre property in Deer Lodge County. The north end of the WMA provides winter range habitat for elk, mule deer, and white-tailed deer. The 829-acre Silva property addition would block up conserved lands between the WMA and a 1,600-acre conservation easement held by FWP with the Willow Glen Ranch. This is a strategic parcel that is integral to the wildlife habitat values on adjacent conserved lands. The parcel also includes about ½ mile of Willow Creek, providing riparian habitat as well as fishing and trapping opportunities.

Public Involvement Process & Results
Upon Commission endorsement, FWP will conduct appropriate public review and analysis.

Alternatives and Analysis
The alternative to this proposal would be to not purchase the property. The parcel has topographic characteristics, road access, and electrical service that would lend itself to subdivision and development. If that were to occur, the habitat values for wintering elk and deer on the adjacent WMA and conservation easement properties would be substantially impacted. Urban development would result in direct conflicts with wintering wildlife as well as hunting and other recreational uses. The parcel is for sale and does not represent an opportunity for a conservation easement.

Agency Recommendation & Rationale
FWP recommends proceeding with purchase of the Silva Property as a strategic addition to Mount Haggin WMA. The purchase will conserve and enhance important winter habitat for elk and deer and would increase recreational opportunity.

Proposed Motion
I move the Commission give preliminary approval for FWP to begin negotiations and related work on this addition to Mount Haggin WMA.